

Spirit of 76

Homeport: San Diego

HIGGINS (DDG-76) NEWSLETTER

Builder: Bath Iron Works

Volume 1, Issue 2

Summer 1998

Captain's Call

By Commander Red Smith, USN
Commanding Officer

The months from spring into summer have brought HIGGINS many new shipmates, achievements and milestones, joy and laughter, and tears also.

It is my sad duty to report to you the sudden death in May of our first Operations Officer, LT Lillian Burke (see page 4). She was an intelligent, hardworking, professional naval officer who also had a fun sense of humor. I valued her advice and I miss her greatly. Her devotion to duty and love of her ship is an example we should strive to meet.

HIGGINS has completed some key milestones in ship construction and others will be upon us soon. May 15 was Aegis Light Off, which tested the interoperability of the weapons systems, sensors and computers. July 8th was Generator Light Off, the first operational test of the ship's ability to produce its own electrical power. We are thrilled that our sponsor, Robin Higgins, will join us for Main Engine Light Off, on the 9th of August, which will demonstrate the operability of the main propulsion systems.

Our last series of major milestones before the ship is transferred from Bath Iron Works to the crew will occur in the fall. In October, HIGGINS will transit under her own power and propulsion to Portland, Maine and enter a dry-dock to have the sonar dome installed.

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The Spirit of 76
Newsletter is
distributed through
the postal system and
is posted at
www.higgins.navy.mil. If someone you
know would like to be
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list, please e-mail
[ftc-](mailto:ftc-snd.n26707@netpms)
snd.n26707@netpms
a.cnet.navy.mil or call
(619) 556-0821.§



Some Words From Our Sponsor

By Lieutenant Colonel Robin Higgins, USMC (Ret.)
Ship Sponsor

I mourned with all of you when HIGGINS' first Operations Officer, LT Lillian Burke, died. What a terrific young life, full of competence and vigor, was lost. I know your Captain was devastated because he shared it with me; he was concerned not only for the loss of a friend and shipmate, but for the loss that the living would feel.

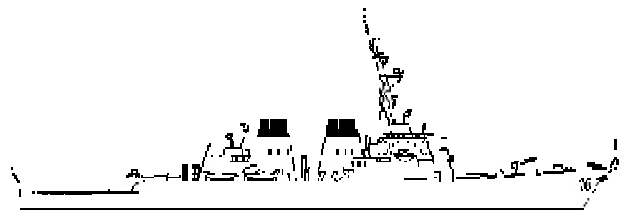
His agony reminded me of that of another fine leader. Four days after my husband had taken charge of Observer Group Lebanon (OGL), one of his officers was killed by a bomb while on a routine patrol.

Every person in OGL was shaken. Col. Higgins mounted an immediate investigation. For Rich, the death of one of his men was hard to accept, and with the pain of the loss came doubts. He had been their commander for only four days. Had they been properly trained? Were they aware of all the correct security procedures? What could he do to ensure it wouldn't happen again? He didn't know, but he couldn't let his men see his uncertainty.

After the death of Capt. McCarthy, morale sank fast among the OGL team members. Their optimism and enthusiasm were waning, and some were becoming leery of serving. Rich saw the hesitation in their step, and the fear on their faces. It was his job to rekindle their spirits. He would remind the soldiers what the mission was about, make them remember the promise they had made to their countries and the United Nations.

Col. Higgins called the troops and their families together. Almost 200 people filled a hall near headquarters. He asked them to join hands. He told them they needed to create a support system of soldiers and families bound together as tightly as they now held onto one another.

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Adventurous Crewmembers Conquer the Maine Wild

By GSM1(SW) Brad Jorgenson
MP Division

The time is 1700 on Friday, and a good portion of the HIGGINS crew is gearing up for a relaxing weekend away to Acadia National Park. We all gathered at the BEQ and loaded up the wagon train with all of our necessities and a few canines (for protection of course). The drive up to the campsite took about three and a half hours due to thunderstorms and slow moving vehicles. We were all convinced that we would be pitching tents in the rain. Incredibly enough once we arrived at Acadia the weather was clear but buggy. In no time flat we had the tents erected, vehicles unloaded, dogs fed and fire blazing enough to attract the local coast guard cutters. For the rest of the evening we sat around the campfire singing songs and sipping O'Doul's. We sang while LT(jg)'s Josh Zloba and Brian Collie kept rhythm with guitars.

Early the next morning, those who actually slept woke up to crickets and a blazing sunrise. The day was ripe for hiking and beachcombing. Arriving at Mount Sergeant, we tightened our belts and began the first ascent of three grueling mountains. The Chief Engineer, LT Randall Bigelow, led what was later described as "CHENG's Death March." The largest of the three mountains was Mount Sergeant with an elevation of (CHENG says) only 1,800 feet. From the top the view was awesome. The view took my breath away with lakes and sea cutting through rolling hills and dramatic granite buttes. Four and a half hours later we ditched onto the carriage trail to return to our starting point. The hike was visual and aerobic. I know everyone involved had a wonderful time and is looking forward to a REAL mountain ... Katahdin. ♣

Editor's Note: HIGGINS personnel did indeed ascend Mt. Katahdin (CHENG's Death March II) on June 20, 1998. In the picture below, they display the flag that hangs on the quarterdeck at the Unit in Maine.



Captain's Call (Continued from Page 1)

In mid-November, we will go to sea for four days to conduct Builders Trial, a comprehensive demonstration of all equipment and systems operability, including a gun and missile shoot and high speed full power run. Finally, HIGGINS will conduct Acceptance Trial in December, at which time the Navy will officially inspect and accept the ship subject to correction of any discrepancies.

The crew of HIGGINS is now 275 sailors with orders. Our detachment in our homeport of San Diego has 130 personnel attached, primarily attending fleet schools and receiving training aboard ships. The Unit at the building yard in Bath, Maine, has 46 personnel involved in the process of construction and acceptance of the ship and training and organization of the crew. Our next major shift will occur from August to October when about 70 more crew members will move to Maine, while the detachment in San Diego continues to receive new personnel.

The crew continues to achieve teamwork and excellence, as you will read about in other articles. HIGGINS has had three re-enlistments, 14 personnel selected for advancement, and awarded 40 personal awards. The camaraderie and teamwork of our group physical training three times weekly paid off well with 84% of the crew scoring outstanding or excellent on our most recent physical fitness test. Lastly I want to congratulate HIGGINS families on new arrivals: GMC and Mrs. Decoste and daughter Delaney, RM2 and Mrs. McCarthy and son Tristen, STGSA and Mrs. Kristofzski and daughter Megan, and ET3 and Mrs. Clarke and daughter Ania. The ship's bell stands ready to serve as a baptismal font for any crewmember and family wishing to christen their baby onboard.

Bottom Line: Ship construction is on track and meeting or exceeding all major milestones. The crew is on its way to becoming the Navy's finest on America's newest warship. We have been officially invited to hold our commissioning ceremony in Port Everglades (FT Lauderdale) Florida next April 24th. Hope to see you all there. ♣

Sailors Qualify in Damage Control

By DC1 Ernest Martin
R Division

One of HIGGINS' main focuses during the Precom period is to qualify crewmembers in the fundamentals they will need to run the ship when Bath Iron Works turns the reins over to the Navy next January. One qualification every sailor needs, from the most junior person to the Captain, is Basic Damage Control. Everyone needs to know what immediate steps to take if there were ever an emergency onboard.

From May 11 to 22, HIGGINS conducted an Accelerated Basic Damage Control Course led by the Damage Control Assistant, LT(jg) Josh Zloba, and DC1 Ernest Martin. The course consisted of 22 hours of classroom instruction and five hours of training onboard USS MILIUS (DDG 69). The lectures covered everything from Basic Safety Precautions to the process of fighting a main machinery space fire.

All participants spent two afternoons on MILIUS as a part of this training. DC1 Martin took charge of teaching hose handling while the DCA finished up with Oxygen Breathing Apparatus and chemical warfare training. By the end of the course, a majority of the 65 participants passed a written test and qualified in Basic Damage Control. Only about 260 to go! ♣



Several HIGGINS crewmembers enjoy spending a day in Boston and participating in RM2 Marnee Keaton's re-enlistment aboard the USS CONSTITUTION in June.

Re-enlisting Can be Interesting

By RMC(SW) Don Acker
OC Division

On June 12, one of today's finest sailors, RM2 Marnee Keaton, had an opportunity to re-enlist on one of the Navy's finest ships, the USS CONSTITUTION. Crewmembers of PCU HIGGINS traveled from Bath to Boston to witness Petty Officer Keaton's re-enlistment aboard "Old Ironsides," which is one of the original six frigates of the United States Navy. The ship has been serving her country continuously since 1797.

Petty Officer Keaton was honorably discharged from the United States Navy by CDR Smith. The re-enlisting officer was ENS Brie Gallagher, Disbursing Officer. The enlistment oath was administered by BMC(SW) Doreen Dower.

By FC3 Francine Eshelman
CX Division

On June 12, whites freshly pressed, FC1(SS) Shawn Bilak walked anxiously onto the field of Qualcomm Stadium, hand-in-hand with his wife, Kelly, and 6-year-old daughter, Jordan. As his good friends from HIGGINS cheered him on from the sidelines, he re-enlisted a half hour before a Padres-Giants game, which turned out to have the largest crowd of any major league game thus far in the 1998 season. The re-enlisting officer was ENS Eric Theus, Air Warfare Officer. After the ceremony, Friar Tuck came by to congratulate Petty Officer Bilak and take a few pictures with him and his family. Several HIGGINS crewmembers then enjoyed watching a Padres victory and a fantastic post-game fireworks display. ♣

HIGGINS' Crewmembers "Test Waters" Worldwide

By EW3 Karen Bennett
OT Division

Going to sea. That's what the Navy is all about. Sailors belong on ships and ships belong at sea. After all, what good is a ship and her crew if they never leave the pier? Underway experience is very important to ongoing training. Running battle scenarios, fire drills, General Quarter drills, etc., are all vital to the function of the ship. Underway also allows for travel to the far reaches of the earth. In what other job could you travel around the world for free?

Here in San Diego, we have to gain our underway training by riding with other ships. There are many ships on which we are able to ride and gain knowledge about our jobs as well as invaluable on-the-job experience. Not only do we have personnel on Navy ships, but also Coast Guard ships.

Right now, GSMFA Nathan Gray, GSEFA Daniel McMillen, SH3 Michael Davis and GSMFA Reynardo Seales are underway with the USS MILIUS (DDG 69) on a 6-month deployment to the Persian Gulf by way of Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore, and Bali. EN3 Christina Shankel, MSSA Scott Pike and OSSN Arne Hveemryan are underway with the USCGC Eagle. They are making port visits all over the East Coast down to Puerto Rico. DC3 Tristan Tomasi was aboard the USCGC Willow visiting the Azores, Ireland, Portugal, Germany, and France. SMSR Akua Walker sailed on the USCGC Tahoma, stopping in Denmark, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Russia. GSM3 Hector Montano spent time in the Caribbean on the USCGC Jefferson City.

While all of these "cruises" sound exciting, much knowledge and experience will be gained. For those straight out of school, we can see what really happens in our job and learn what it takes to make it in the fleet. And for those who have "been there, done that," it just adds to the ongoing learning experience of being a "Sailor." ♣



ENS Eric Theus, FC1(SS) Shawn Bilak, wife Kelly and daughter Jordan pose for photos with Friar Tuck after FC1 Bilak's re-enlistment at Qualcomm Stadium in June.

Time to Meet ... Our Ombudsman

By Deborah Foreman

Hello, my name is Deborah Foreman, and I am the newly selected Command Ombudsman representing the USS HIGGINS families on the West Coast. My husband is GSMC(SW) John Foreman, MP Division. We have six beautiful children ages 8 to 22.

My job as Ombudsman is to be a liaison for the ship, families, and the community – both civilian and military. I attend meetings and seminars to keep informed of current and future issues that concern our command and families. I am available for your needs 24 hours a day for emergencies, and 9 in the morning until 5 in the evening for non-emergencies or just a listening ear. Anything that is relayed to me by you is kept confidential unless the command has deemed it a critical situation of which they must be informed, or it is a matter of life or death. You may reach me at (619) 268-4271. Please leave a message if there is no answer. Your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Speaking with other spouses, there seems to be an interest for starting a support group. We need to start getting things rolling toward the homeporting of the ship next year, and for a great Homecoming. If you are interested in meeting other spouses, please call me. The command is in full support of our families, and needs our families to support the command. To do this, we need to work together. Call me if you have any ideas or input for future meetings, meeting places, etc. I'm looking forward to meeting each and every one of you.♣

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

HIGGINS Web Page: www.higgins.navy.mil

Robin Higgins' Web Page:
www.quartznet.com/higgins/ship.htm

PCD HIGGINS Admin (San Diego): (619) 556-9935

PCU HIGGINS Admin (Bath): (207) 442-5124

Command Master Chief: (619) 556-9956

Ship Store: (619) 556-0364 / (207) 442-5131

Public Affairs Officer: (619) 556-0821 or e-mail
ftc-snd.n26707@netpsa.cnet.navy.mil

Sponsor (Continued from Page 1)

Each person in the room was connected to all the others by a military lineage, he told them, a long line of soldiers and their families who had given their lives and loves for peace and honor. Whatever his fate, the soldier's dedication to the mission made him forever a part of that line.

His men understood. In order to endure tragedy, a soldier drew strength from his military brethren. For the troops of OGL, Rich would be the source of that strength. It would flow from him.

Over the following weeks, Rich saw the enthusiasm return. His men were from different parts of the world, yet they had heard his message. It was universal, this soldier's devotion to one another, and Rich knew it. Their chief had come through once again. He was their motivator, mentor, and fellow soldier. But most important of all, he was their leader. Rich made sure both sides saw that he wouldn't be a behind-the-scenes commander. From the beginning, he maintained a high-visibility professional profile, letting the Israeli and Lebanese forces know that he would be an active peacekeeper.

Less than a month later, Col. Higgins was captured. We never heard from him again. But, you know, his men carried on because they had heard his words about that bond. They heeded his guidance. They remembered his leadership.

In the years to come, there will be losses aboard the HIGGINS, in peace and in combat. There will be sadness and agony and pain. But there will also be moments of joy and happiness. And together, with the bond that has existed through the ages and around the world, you triumph.♣

LT Burke, We Will Miss You



Lieutenant Lillian Burke, Operations Officer, passed away suddenly on May 5 of meningitis. She leaves behind her husband Larry, son Robert, parents Preston and Annette Shimer, brother P. Carl Shimer, grandfather Paul Gates, and many friends and admirers on HIGGINS and throughout the Navy. LT Burke's positive attitude, friendly demeanor and professional knowledge were inspirational to us all. In her memory, one of HIGGINS' small boats will be named *Lillian*. Her spirit will live on in HIGGINS and help us to become better sailors and better people. We will miss you, LT Burke.♣

HIGGINS Helping Others

By SMSA Akua Walker
OC Division

On July 25 a team of high-spirited and enormous-hearted HIGGINS sailors set out to lend a hand to renovate Ms. Virginia Wilson's home as part of the Christmas in July project, which enables elderly people in the San Diego area to live in better-conditioned homes.

At 0730 we started the magnificent transformation of Ms. Wilson's home. We performed rewiring and remodeled the bathroom, as well as did yardwork, painted, and installed security bars. The weather was hot and humid, however no one's spirit seemed to be affected by it. We saw the progress we were making and the beaming smiles from Ms. Wilson and her daughter-in-law.

There were a few visitors throughout the day, including a captain, a chaplain, and the mayor of Chula Vista. Santa Claus rode up on his motorcycle shortly after lunch to take a few pictures with us.

This project was a huge success and a valuable experience for everyone from HIGGINS involved, namely: ENS Jerry Pilewski, GM1 Arthur Warner, RM1 Glenn Freriks, GSM2 Claude Martinez, IC2 Somphamith Rattanaxay, FC3 Christopher Flores, FC3 Francine Eshelman, GSMFN Paul Conel, GSMFN Laurence Mallari, OSSN Richard Travis, CTR1 Laurence Carlen and SMSA Akua Walker. 🍀



Outstanding Physical Readiness

SK1 T. Alfarano	FC3 C. Andersen	OS1 C. Antrim
HMC N. Callow	FC3 B. Carroll	OSSN J. Castrejon
RMC D. Acker	GSMFN P. Conel	GM3 O. Delaney
OSSN A. Dizon	FC3 F. Eshelman	ENS R. Evangelista
GSMC J. Foreman	DC1 K. Frost	GM1 B. Gergen
ET1 E. Hemingway	GSMFA R. Herrero	FC3 M. Gschwendtner
SK1 A. Jenkins	MSC N. Lewis	GSEFN R. Lorita
GSMFN L. Mallari	SK2 R. Martinez	STG2 R. McGuire
BM1 D. Minnick	GSEFN D. McMillen	FC3 N. Moore
STG3 P. Moss	FC3 G. Petrosky	GSM3 J. Phillips
ENS J. Pilewski	GSM2 J. Pioli	FC3 C. Poe
RMSR C. Ramey	EN2 J. Ramseyer	IC2 S. Rattanaxay
STG2 R. Reyes	PNC R. Rodolfo	LT J. Rust
STGCS C. Scavo	ENS K. Schwarze	GSMFN R. Seales
SH2 S. Seamster	EN1 W. Sinclair	ENS E. Theus
ENS M. Wallace	RMSA J. Townsend	ENS E. Watson
LT(jg) J. Zloba	LT E. Ver Hage	LT(jg) J. Babcock
GMC S. Decoste	FC1 L. Duncan	ENS B. Gallagher
SKC J. Martin	LCDR F. Martin	DC1 E. Martin
GSM3 H. Montano	CTO1 N. Pidgeon	CDR J. Smith

Sailors of the Quarter

PCD Senior Sailor of the Quarter:

OS1 Laura Johnson

PCD Junior Sailor of the Quarter:

FC3 Francine Eshelman

PCU Sailor of the Quarter:

EW2 Bart Cheney

Navy Commendation Medal

MSC(NAC) Norma Lewis

Navy Achievement Medal

FC1(SS) Shawn Bilak	CTO1(SW) Nicholas Pidgeon
HMC Neale Callow	YN3 Cheryle Querubin
GMC(SW) Stephen Decoste	GSM1 Alfredo Martinez
FC1 Terry Smith	RM2 Joseph McCarthy
LT(jg) Josh Zloba	

Good Conduct Medal

EWC(SW) Robert Walker	GSM1(SW) Brad Jorgenson
STG1 Darrell Heagney	IC1 Shane Bornet
GMC(SW) Stacy Williams	

RECENTLY ADVANCED SAILORS

NCC(sel.)(SW) Charles Wright	
GSM1 Mitchell Couture	GSE1(SW) James Batchelor
RM2 Arthur Myles	IC2 Somphamith Rattanaxay
DC2 Richard Trisket	YN2 Karen Sztukowski
RM3 Douglas Wynne	FC3 Christopher Andersen
FC3 Benjamine Carroll	OS3 Justin Martin
RM3 Lamarcus Martin	STG3 David Roth
GSE3 Jon Stiffler	

At left, STG3 David Roth, GSE3 Jon Stiffler, RM3 Lamarcus Martin and OS3 Justin Martin show off their new crowns.

1998 United Way Day Of Caring

By GSM1(SW) Brad Jorgenson
MP Division

Every year hundreds of volunteers from businesses and schools of the greater Portland, Maine, area gather to renovate, rehabilitate, and landscape during the United Way Day Of Caring. On May 21, HIGGINS did some caring of our own. We would like to recognize the following crew members for their efforts in this years Day Of Caring: LT Jon Lundquist (HIGGINS coordinator), GMC(SW) Stephen DeCoste, GSEC(SW) Robert Durham, Julie Durham, CTO1 Nick Pidgeon, GSM1(SW) Brad Jorgenson and GSE1(SW) James Batchelor.

When the day was done, over 800 volunteers completed 44 projects around Greater Portland. More than \$71,000 worth of labor helped clear ice storm debris, repair playgrounds, paint facilities, plant gardens, build and clear trails, and much more. The Day Of Caring was definitely a success. BRAVO ZULU! 🍀